United Nations S/PV.4035

Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

Provisional

4035th Meeting

Friday, 20 August 1999, 11.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Andjaba	(Namibia)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Moura
	Canada	Mr. Duval
	China	Mr. Chen Xu
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Malaysia	Mr. Mohammad Kamal
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (S/1999/836)

99-85672 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (S/1999/836)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Dabor (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, documents S/1999/836 and S/1999/836/Add.1.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1999/874, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of members of the Council to document S/1999/777, which contains the text of a letter dated 12 July 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Togo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the text of the Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) concluded at Lomé on 7 July 1999.

The first speaker is the representative of Sierra Leone, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Dabor (Sierra Leone): The Sierra Leone delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. We are grateful for the opportunity to address the Council once again in its consideration of the situation in Sierra Leone.

After lengthy and often painful discussions in Lomé with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Government of Sierra Leone signed a comprehensive Peace Agreement with the RUF on 7 July. President Kabbah's signature on that document, on behalf of the children of Sierra Leone, was the culmination of his untiring and consistent determination, since his election three and a half years ago, to bring about lasting peace in our country through dialogue. He took calculated risks to end a conflict which he had inherited. As he said recently, in signing the Lomé Agreement we went the extra mile, to the extent that the Government is now seen in some circles as having given far too much to those who had terrorized our people for more than eight years. Today, we are grateful to the Security Council for recognizing and commending, in the draft resolution before it today, the courageous efforts of the Government to achieve peace. We also note with appreciation that the Council has recognized the legislative and other measures that the Government has taken to implement the Lomé Peace Agreement.

We welcome the expansion of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) and are grateful to the Council for authorizing it. We fully understand the political and financial constrains involved in the deployment of observer and peacekeeping missions. We wish, however, that today's decision had come a little earlier, considering that the expansion is only provisional and that under the terms of the Peace Agreement the disarmament and demobilization process was to commence two days ago, that is six weeks after the signing of the Agreement.

The Government's objective in the conflict was certainly not to score a military victory, but to defend innocent Sierra Leoneans, including children, who had no means of defending themselves in what has been described as one of the most atrocious conflicts in Africa. All along we had made solemn appeals to the international community, and to the United Nations in particular, at least to help the Government contain those

who were perpetrating the atrocities. All along we had maintained that it was not enough to issue statements calling for an end to the so-called fighting. The situation had deteriorated to the point where it was no longer fair to exert undue pressure on the Government literally to abandon its responsibility for the safety of the people of Sierra Leone and to make concessions to the rebels. We pleaded with the Security Council, especially with those members with the necessary political and material wherewithal to exert pressure on the perpetrators of the atrocities and their external supporters, to end the eight-year terror in our country.

Despite the destruction of life and property and the maiming committed by the rebels against the people of Sierra Leone, including children as young as six months old, they are prepared to bury the hatchet for the sake of permanent peace. It is a bitter pill to swallow, but that is the price they are prepared to pay for peace. Therefore, we call on the international community to support the people of Sierra Leone in their search for peace and not to do anything that would undermine the Peace Agreement which about six weeks was delicately negotiated by the parties in Lomé.

The security and safety of our people were and still are vital. We are convinced that the Peace Agreement which we signed in Lomé will remain fragile until we succeed in disarming the combatants. Indeed, any inordinate delay in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process will render the entire Agreement meaningless.

While we are happy that in the draft resolution the Security Council calls on the RUF and other armed groups to begin immediately to disband and give up their arms, and to participate fully in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the Government of Sierra Leone would like to express the hope that the additional United Nations military observers will be deployed as soon as possible in order to build confidence in the disarmament and demobilization process which has just begun, and that the ongoing consultations on the future peacekeeping mechanism in Sierra Leone, involving the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the United Nations, will be expedited, thus ensuring that delays in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process as a whole are not used by anyone as a pretext for reneging on the Peace Agreement.

In our view, the United Nations should take advantage of the existing momentum generated by the signing of the Peace Agreement, by initiating the disarmament process without further delay, before frustration and even resistance to disarmament begin to develop among the combatants. The void which has been created in the process since the signing of the Agreement is very dangerous.

As far as the ongoing consultations on the revised mandates of ECOMOG and UNOMSIL are concerned, we would like to emphasize that ECOMOG has acquired considerable experience in both the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts. This fact cannot be ignored. The Security Council itself, in the present draft resolution, commends ECOMOG for its outstanding contribution to the promotion of a peaceful settlement in Sierra Leone. It recognizes the need to maintain the critical presence in the country of ECOMOG, which has executed a similar disarmament process in Liberia, which is familiar with the terrain as well as the operational tactics of the combatants in Sierra Leone, and which has performed the equally important job of retrieving hidden weapons.

We should add that since the signing of the Peace Agreement more than a month ago, a great deal of confidence has been built between ECOMOG and the combatants. ECOMOG has even played host to many of the key field commanders of the RUF in several parts of the country.

The Government of Sierra Leone wholeheartedly welcomes the various provisions in the draft resolution concerning the need for international assistance in support of ECOMOG, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, humanitarian relief and for long-term reconstruction, economic and social recovery and development.

In the current post-conflict settlement programme, we attach importance to the welfare of ex-combatants. We attach equal importance to the needs of the victims of the rebel war. Therefore, we welcome the emphasis that the present draft resolution places on the mobilization of international assistance for a special trust fund to enable the Government to design and implement a programme that will address the special needs of war victims, in particular those who have suffered maiming and mutilation.

In closing, permit me to quote from a statement made by President Kabbah during his recent visit to London.

> "It is unfortunate that the scale of magnitude of the human tragedy which engulfed Sierra Leone, a democratic and sovereign member of the committee of nations, over the past several years, is now being realized and assessed in the context of the recent crisis in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo ... The conclusion is that the situation in Sierra Leone-Kosovo comparison will continue to be highlighted in the context of generating resources for post-conflict reconstruction in both places."

The President: I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): By chance, Sir, I find myself the first member of the Council to speak in the first open discussion of your presidency. Your presidency marks a real landmark, both for your country and for you personally. We have much appreciated the way in which you have smoothly guided the Council's work so far this month. I want to assure you that you will have our full cooperation for the remainder of your tenure.

Sierra Leone has come a long way since the security crisis last December. In the last few months, there have been some very real strides towards peace. As the representative of Sierra Leone has just noted, the negotiations leading to the Lomé Peace Agreement were difficult, with both sides — in particular the Government of Sierra Leone — making some difficult and uncomfortable compromises. Those compromises, however difficult and uncomfortable, have at last given the people of Sierra Leone a real chance of peace — a peace which they badly need, and a peace which we are here to support today.

We pay tribute to the Government of Sierra Leone and to all those who have strived to bring about that peace. In particular, we applaud the vital role played by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Without ECOMOG's efforts to bring about peace and preserve security, there would not be a peace process for us to support.

We must now focus on the future. Sierra Leone needs a coordinated and sustained effort by the international community to secure lasting peace. What Sierra Leone does not need is a Peace Agreement that fails, as others have done before it. The United Kingdom views the draft resolution we are to adopt today as a sign of the United Nations determination to support the implementation of the Lomé Agreement. It marks a real turning point. But it is only a first step towards a much more substantial United Nations role.

We have no illusions. The Lomé Agreement is not perfect. The inclusion of a blanket amnesty for those who have committed appalling atrocities has rightly caused concern. But this was one of many hard choices that the Government and the people of Sierra Leone had to make in the interests of securing a workable agreement.

Now the international community must help ensure that the Agreement promotes accountability and an end to impunity, and begins the long process of national reconciliation. We accordingly pledge our continued support to the Government of Sierra Leone. We will work with and assist the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation and Human Rights Commissions now foreseen for Sierra Leone.

We welcome the steps that the Government of Sierra Leone has already taken to realize the Agreement. But the lack of momentum on its overall implementation threatens to undermine the peace. The way ahead is clear.

First, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme must start immediately. Delay risks a descent into wider lawlessness. Beginning the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme will also help alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in certain parts of country. We urge all those involved — the World Bank, the Government of Sierra Leone, ECOMOG and the United Nations — to use the resources available to get the programme under way immediately. Urgent contributions are also needed for the World Bank trust fund to help sustain the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

Secondly, Foday Sankoh must return to Freetown and assume his responsibilities under the Peace Agreement with the absolute minimum of delay. He must ensure that his followers understand and adhere to the Agreement and persuade them to release all remaining detainees, including children.

Thirdly, we must establish a full United Nations peacekeeping operation to assist in the implementation of the Peace Agreement and to help create a climate of confidence. The larger Observer Mission that we are

authorizing today is only a stopgap. The recent hostage-taking only highlights the urgent need to address the security of United Nations military observers. We look forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations on the mandate and structure of an enhanced United Nations peacekeeping presence. ECOMOG's continuing presence until the peace is secure will be vital to the success of this endeavour. We hope that the United Nations and ECOMOG will agree soon on their respective areas of responsibility under the new peacekeeping regime. The sooner the new framework is in place, the better for the United Nations, ECOMOG and the Sierra Leonean people. Clarity is needed to mobilize international support for the operation.

For the first time in eight years, Sierra Leone has a real chance of bringing to an end, once and for all, the appalling suffering of its people. The decision we are making today must turn that expectation into reality.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to my country and to me personally.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I associate myself with the kind words addressed to you and to your country by the representatives of Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom. I cannot say it any better than Ambassador Eldon did.

The Security Council is preparing to adopt an extremely important draft resolution on Sierra Leone. Its significance goes beyond the expansion of the staff of the United Nations Observer Mission in that country; it consists primarily in the fact that the Security Council is making a significant contribution to the consolidation of the important progress that has been made in finding a political settlement in Sierra Leone.

We are pleased to note that there are positive developments inside and outside that African country. At the same time, we see how fragile the peace in Sierra Leone remains, and we therefore deem it absolutely essential that the interested parties do everything they can to consolidate the gains already made. This applies primarily to the representatives of the belligerent forces in Sierra Leone, who must scrupulously abide by the Peace Agreement. A great deal will also depend on neighbouring countries and regional organizations and on the atmosphere in which peace-building in Sierra Leone takes place.

As always, a special role will be played by the international community. We believe that the Secretary-General's proposal to develop a strategic framework approach for Sierra Leone is extremely timely. We are prepared to play a constructive role in this effort.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that our common efforts will make it possible to establish a long-awaited lasting peace in the long-suffering country of Sierra Leone.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Allow me also to extend the congratulations of my delegation to you, Mr. President, on the efficient way in which you are presiding over the Security Council during the month of August.

The Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF), signed on 7 July at Lomé, marks a decisive moment in the recent history of that country. We trust that this will be the beginning of a stage of reconstruction and reconciliation for Sierra Leone, as well as one of stability and progress for the region.

We wish to underscore the role played by President Eyadema of Togo; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis Okelo; the other leaders of the region; and most especially President Kabbah, who had to take very difficult decisions at delicate moments in the negotiations.

We would also like to highlight the contribution made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and those who generously provided it with the resources to allow it to carry out its operations. We would also like to recall the importance of continuing to provide it with assistance so that it can continue to perform its tasks.

We would also like to take this opportunity to pay very sincere and express tribute to those who have lost their lives in defence of the ideals of the United Nations. We trust that all of us in the Security Council will understand the importance of committing ourselves explicitly to protecting those who carry out dangerous missions on behalf of our Organization.

The implementation of the Lomé Agreement will call for joint action on the part of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone, of the African States involved in the process through ECOWAS and ECOMOG, and of the United Nations. The process of reconciliation and reconstruction in Sierra Leone will no doubt be arduous and complex. It will require considerable human and economic resources. In particular, it will require strong political will to overcome through negotiation and dialogue the difficulties that will surely arise.

We believe that the Agreement establishes the necessary institutions for the task of reconciliation and reconstruction. This is where the international community, the United Nations and the Security Council in particular should focus their assistance, which does not consist merely of sending military observers and additional civilian staff. The implementation of the Agreement will require a clear commitment to the values of democracy, liberty and the rule of law. For example, we believe that a specific and fundamental way of giving shape to those values will be to place a portion of the proceeds derived from the mining of gold and diamonds into a special account to be used, among other things, to establish rehabilitation, compensation and education programmes. We consider that this should include the setting up of special education programmes aimed at the children and young people who have been victims of mutilation. The leaders of the future should emerge from that group, for they understand better than anyone else the horror and injustice of war.

The Lomé Agreement is complex and was the result of intensive negotiations. The granting of wide-ranging and general amnesty, as provided for in the Agreement, raises very important questions. Argentina's position and practice in this connection have been uniform and unswerving. However, we understand that that very delicate decision can be taken only by the parties involved, which assume the historical responsibility inherent in that decision. At the same time, we wish to express our satisfaction with the provisions of the Agreement that establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

The draft resolution before us is well balanced and addresses realistically the main problems. At the appropriate time, we will carefully study the proposals of the Secretary-General on new mandates and concepts for the operations of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone. We are convinced that the United Nations has an irreplaceable role to play in maintaining and consolidating peace in Sierra Leone.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Chen Xu (China) *(interpretation from Chinese)*: Like other delegations, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to you, Sir, and to the delegation of Namibia for your skilful exercise of the presidency.

On 7 July this year, the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF) signed a Peace Agreement at Lomé. Sierra Leone's civil war, which lasted for more than eight years, is finally over. The Chinese Government would like to express its sincere appreciation to the parties concerned for their active and constructive efforts to promote the signing of that Agreement. We would also like to thank the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for their outstanding contributions to stabilizing the situation there and for their promotion of the peace process.

The peace in Sierra Leone is just beginning. Everything must start from scratch, and urgent assistance is needed. At the recently held third meeting of the international contact group on the question of Sierra Leone, the parties concerned indicated that they would provide further assistance to that country. We would like to express our appreciation for this.

China has always supported the popularly elected Government in Sierra Leone and the peace process there. We have provided various kinds of assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone through various channels, as well as to ECOMOG. Within our capabilities, we will continue to provide that country with various types of assistance.

At the same time, we should see very clearly that the peace in that country is still very fragile and that many uncertainties remain. We call upon the international community to take a forward-looking approach in support of the implementation of the Peace Agreement in order to help the people of Sierra Leone achieve national reconciliation at an early date and to begin economic reconstruction.

We have always held that after the signing of the Lomé Agreement the United Nations, and especially the Security Council, should respond as expeditiously as possible to support the peace process there with concrete actions.

The present domestic situation in that country calls for the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) to take on a new and important role in monitoring the ceasefire, ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance and assisting with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into the workforce of the former combatants.

We were pleased to note that in his report to the Security Council on the question of Sierra Leone, the Secretary-General put forward some concrete proposals on the expansion of UNOMSIL. The Security Council has on that basis speedily prepared a draft resolution, which we support. We hope that the Secretariat can, as soon as possible, carry out the necessary preparations for the expansion of UNOMSIL and conduct consultations with the Government on specific arrangements.

We believe that an expanded UNOMSIL will be able fully to consider the views of the Government of Sierra Leone and closely to cooperate with ECOMOG while continuing to play an important role in the consolidation of peace in that country.

We believe also that the current expansion of UNOMSIL is only a provisional measure, as its strength still falls short of the actual need. We hope that the Secretary-General can, on the basis of consultations with the parties concerned, put forward recommendations to the Security Council on the final role and strength of UNOMSIL.

The President: I thank the representative of China for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Mohammad Kamal (Malaysia): My delegation, like the others before me, would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your country on the smooth manner in which you have conducted the work of the Council thus far. We are confident that under your able and wise leadership the work of the Council will be brought to a successful conclusion in the remaining 11 days of your presidency.

My delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us this morning, as we believe that early and decisive action by the Council is pertinent to support the Government and people of Sierra Leone in their deep and palpable yearning for peace following the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front in Lomé on 7 July 1999. We view the Lomé Peace Agreement as a milestone and a great step forward for Sierra Leone.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to commend the tireless and inexorable efforts of the President of Togo, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and all those involved in facilitating the delicate and difficult negotiations in Lomé for their contribution to this courageous achievement. In particular, Malaysia would like to commend the unflinching efforts and the dedication of the Military Observer Group of ECOWAS (ECOMOG) in helping to restore peace and stability in the country.

We note that progress is being made by the parties towards the full implementation of the Peace Agreement. In this regard, we wish to underscore that the immediate priority in Sierra Leone is to consolidate peace. We concur with the Secretary-General's views that this Agreement affords a unique opportunity to bring an end to the conflict. The international community must endeavour to continue assisting Sierra Leone in its national reconciliation efforts and in the reconstruction of its devastated economy. To this end, Malaysia believes that the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) has a critical role to play, particularly in the phase following the signing of the Peace Agreement.

We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to authorize, as an immediate first step, a provisional increase in the number of UNOMSIL military observers, who are to be deployed in a gradual manner and operate under the security provided by ECOMOG. Malaysia, for its part, will give its utmost consideration to providing additional military observers to UNOMSIL despite the recent regrettable hostage-taking incident, in which a Malaysian military observer was among the hostages held. My delegation views the incident with great concern and wishes to underscore the importance of the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel. The hostage-taking incident in which some UNOMSIL and ECOMOG personnel were held captive is a grim reminder of the still — fragile and precarious situation in the country.

Needless to say, the challenges ahead remain daunting. The international community and this Organization have indeed an important responsibility to assist Sierra Leone and to ensure that momentum is maintained in this peace process. Let us not allow this momentum be an ephemeral one. We must join hands to

advance the peace process in Sierra Leone. There is no other option.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Sir, I too wish to pay tribute to the manner in which you and your delegation have discharged your responsibilities in guiding the Council during the month of August.

During the discussions the Council held on 4 August last on the situation in Sierra Leone following the seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), my delegation expressed its appreciation at the positive developments in the situation in that country.

Today, as the Council prepares to vote on the draft resolution before it, I merely wish to reiterate my delegation's satisfaction at the welcome events that have recently occurred in Sierra Leone, in particular the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Government and the rebels and the adoption of the laws to implement that Agreement. I refer, *inter alia*, to the amnesty laws, the transformation of the Revolutionary United Front into a political party, the lofty responsibilities conferred upon Corporal Sankoh and the establishment of bodies charged with monitoring the implementation of the Agreement and examining related disputes.

At its first meeting, held in Freetown on 7 August last, the Joint Committee for the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement also welcomed these positive occurrences. They were the outcome of the mobilization and joint efforts of, and the difficult choices made by, the international community, President Kabbah and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), to which we pay well-deserved tribute.

My delegation is aware that major challenges still lie ahead for the full and final normalization of the situation in Sierra Leone, and we welcome the draft resolution that we are about to adopt. We are counting on the assistance of donors and the international community to provide considerable support for efforts directed at the consolidation of peace, in particular the tasks of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, as well as the humanitarian aspects. The United Nations will have a major role to play in mobilizing that support. We are in favour of starting up this crucial stage of the process of implementation of the Peace Agreement in order to avoid any further complications.

Naturally, in this respect the cooperation of the parties with the United Nations and ECOMOG is absolutely essential, as is ongoing logistical support for ECOMOG. In support of all of these efforts, my delegation expresses its hope that Corporal Sankoh and his comrades will take the opportunity offered to them by the Lomé Agreement to give the people of Sierra Leone the peace and freedom to which they so justly aspire.

The President: I thank the representative of Gabon for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Moura (Brazil): First, I wish to associate myself and my delegation with the previous expressions of appreciation to you, Mr. President, and your delegation.

We support the draft resolution before us. We believe this initiative will assure the continuation and the expansion of the United Nations presence in Sierra Leone. However, while taking fully into account the political intricacies involved in achieving the Peace Agreement, I wish to put on record that we do not associate ourselves with the expressions of commendation directed to the leadership of the Revolutionary United Front.

We commend the democratically elected Government of President Kabbah, the Parliament and the people of Sierra Leone for concluding the Peace Agreement, as well as the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for fostering it. In this regard, we stress the role played by Nigeria and Togo in particular.

We concur with the views expressed in paragraph 54 of the Secretary-General's report (S/1999/836) before us. We also encourage him to present in a timely way his proposal for a new mandate and concept of operation for an extended United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL).

We believe that if we do not want to fail our collective responsibility to the people of Sierra Leone, we will have to assure a robust and a multidisciplinary medium-term presence of the United Nations. This will help a great deal in assuring that the heinous acts against

the human rights of the people of Sierra Leone will not be repeated and that true reconciliation will take place.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, we are very pleased that it is under the presidency of Namibia that the Security Council has been able to approve peacekeeping operations in Africa. On 6 August 1999, under your presidency and that of your country, we approved the peacekeeping operation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Today we will adopt a draft resolution on Sierra Leone, and we hope that, still under your presidency, between now and the end of the month, there will be hope for another part of Africa, the Horn of Africa.

The draft resolution submitted to the Council authorizes the deployment of new United Nations observers to Sierra Leone within the framework of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). This draft resolution follows up the adoption of the Lomé Agreement, on 7 July 1999, between the Government of Sierra Leone and the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front. This Agreement gives the people of Sierra Leone a long-awaited opportunity to put an end to a conflict that has afflicted the country for eight years. The representative of Sierra Leone has recalled for all of us the atrocities that have been committed against the civilian population throughout this long conflict. In particular, he has cited the mutilation of many victims: women, children and men.

My delegation welcomes the role of all those who have worked to achieve this Agreement, particularly the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the President of Togo in his capacity as Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose country hosted the talks, and the Presidents of Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Liberia. We also pay tribute to the role played by the ECOWAS Monitoring Group.

France expresses its satisfaction with this decisive step taken to promote peace and calls upon the Government of Sierra Leone and the leaders of the Revolutionary United Front to work together to ensure the full implementation of the provisions of the Agreement. We are fully aware of the difficulties that the parties to the Agreement will face in their efforts for reconciliation.

Africans themselves, through their regional organizations, have been able to put an end to an atrocious war and to restore peace. They have asked for the support of the United Nations and the Security Council. The United Nations must respond to that request in keeping with its peacekeeping responsibilities. That is the purpose of the draft resolution that we are called upon to adopt.

For us, there should be no double standards with regard to United Nations peacekeeping in the world. Accordingly, our delegation will vote in favour of this initial draft resolution, which will be followed by others. France intends to make a contribution to increasing the size of UNOMSIL and stands ready to make a number of military observers available to that force.

The President: I thank the representative of France for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Mr. President, when I came to see you for the bilaterals, I told you one thing. I said, "Please keep the flag flying." You have been doing so admirably well. Thank you for doing so, and I hope you will continue to keep the flag flying for the rest of your mandate.

My delegation would first of all like to congratulate the Government and the people of Sierra Leone as a whole on their relentless efforts to achieve peace.

The signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) represents an important milestone in our collective quest for peace in Sierra Leone. This event provides the Sierra Leonean people a unique opportunity to turn a new page in their history, to a chapter of peace after nine years of senseless war. The people of Sierra Leone have undergone untold suffering. Peace in that country is long overdue.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) also deserves special commendation. We therefore thank all the countries that contribute troops to ECOMOG for their steadfast commitment to restoring relative safety and security to Sierra Leone by putting to an end the carnage that we all witnessed for so long.

The ceasefire agreement is holding, but the security situation is extremely fragile. Everything should be done to make sure that it holds permanently. The international community must therefore continue to show its solidarity with the Government and the people of Sierra Leone in

these trying moments. It cannot be gainsaid, however, that the people of Sierra Leone bear the ultimate responsibility for ensuring peace in their war-ravaged country. We must build on these positive developments. We should not let this opportunity slip away. This is why it is extremely important for the leader of the RUF to return to Freetown, as agreed in Lomé. There is no room for tergiversation.

My delegation welcomes the commitment demonstrated by the Government of Sierra Leone in its efforts to implement the Lomé Peace Agreement. In the minds of most Sierra Leoneans, peace is paramount. But what is peace without justice?

This is why, in our view, every effort should be made to address violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. There is the need for a delicate balance under the circumstances. Like most delegations, we are concerned about the blanket amnesty granted to the RUF. While this may not foster justice, we understand the circumstances under which it was granted. We also share the disclaimer entered by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on this issue.

Let us be very clear about one thing: the people of Sierra Leone have played their part. The rest of the international community should also play its part by pursuing and bringing to justice those accused of war crimes. In this context, we welcome the establishment of the national forum for human rights and the adoption of the Human Rights Manifesto, which contains commitments for immediate and sustained promotion and protection of human rights. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be established pursuant to the Agreement could go a long way towards creating the environment for reconciliation. We hope that that Commission will be established as soon as possible.

While we are considering enhancing the strength of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), very important and challenging tasks lie ahead. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants is crucial to the peace process. We understand that some 4,000 rebels are assembled in Makeni, waiting to be disarmed. We should act swiftly to ensure that the disarmament centres are opened quickly and that disarmament work commences. Durable peace would be unattainable if there were no successful disarmament of the ex-combatants. In a region awash with small arms, the need to act swiftly cannot be overemphasized.

Let me now turn to the humanitarian situation. The humanitarian situation in Sierra Leone is a real catastrophe. With the opening of roads that were hitherto closed and general improvements in the level of access to those in need, the number of people needing immediate and urgent assistance has increased significantly. We thank all those States and organizations that have been providing assistance. However, a lot more remains to be done. We therefore appeal for more assistance.

The victims of the war, in particular those who have suffered maiming and mutilation, require special assistance. The special needs of children and women should also be given top priority. We welcome the leading role being played by the United Nations Children's Fund in this regard in cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

We understand that over 2,000 children were abducted by the RUF. Although some few hundred of them have been released, which we welcome, we urge it to release all the remaining abductees in its custody.

The challenges with which Sierra Leone is confronted are enormous and diverse. A comprehensive political strategy and assistance programme is required. We therefore agree with the Secretary-General that a strategic framework for Sierra Leone will be necessary. In this context, we welcome the establishment of the steering group headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

The assistance that the United Nations can provide to Sierra Leone is crucial for the consolidation of peace in that country. For this reason, we support the draft resolution before us. We know that the level of deployment of UNOMSIL needs to be further strengthened, and we therefore look forward to the Secretary-General's proposals for a concept of operations. Work on this should be expedited, as time is of the essence.

ECOMOG, too, needs to be beefed up. Arrangements for the sharing of responsibilities between the United Nations and ECOWAS need to be expedited. It is imperative that we put on the ground a credible and neutral force as soon as possible to carry out urgent tasks and prevent a relapse into fighting.

It must be pointed out from the outset that ECOMOG has material and logistics problems. We thank

all those States, in particular the United Kingdom and the United States of America, for their vital support. Much more is still needed. We encourage all those who can do so to continue to provide assistance to ECOMOG so that it can pursue the noble tasks of restoring peace to Sierra Leone, and restoring to Sierra Leone its past glory as a centre for learning and the training and development of great minds, erasing the gruesome image of a killing field.

The President: I thank the representative of the Gambia for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*spoke in French*): We fully associate ourselves with the congratulations addressed to you, Mr. President, particularly those so eloquently expressed by the representatives of Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom and France.

I would first like to pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis Okelo, for his important contribution, and to the men and women of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) for the essential work that they are carrying out in conditions that are difficult and still dangerous, as the representative of Malaysia has stressed. I should also like to pay tribute to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for its tireless efforts, and recall the sacrifices made by the countries members of ECOMOG that are providing troops to protect the people and the Government of Sierra Leone.

Canada welcomes the decision that will be taken today to authorize the expansion of the United Nations Military Observer Mission in Sierra Leone. This decision is proof of the commitment of the international community to the implementation of the Lomé Agreement and to the consolidation of peace and security in Sierra Leone. We are particularly pleased that this draft resolution takes up several of the themes developed during the open Security Council debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which took place last February: the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel, the importance of access to humanitarian assistance, the special needs of children and the importance of human rights and humanitarian law. Like so many other modern conflicts, the war in Sierra Leone has had a devastating impact on innocent civilians.

The effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the rebel forces will be essential in guaranteeing future peace and stability in Sierra Leone. Ex-combatants must be disarmed and properly reintegrated into society if Sierra Leone is to avoid the high crime rates and social unrest that are so frequent in countries emerging from conflicts in which there is an abundance of small arms. The success of disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of child soldiers, as well as the resumption of normal life for all children affected by war, will also be decisive if they are to be able to take an active part in the reconstruction of their country. This task will not be easy, but it must be undertaken as quickly as possible with the full support of the Security Council.

(*spoke in English*)

The challenge facing the people of Sierra Leone is a daunting one. Unimaginable atrocities have been inflicted upon innocent civilians, the most appalling committed against women and children. Gross human rights abuses — torture, amputation, rape, mutilation and the forcible recruitment of children as combatants — have torn apart the social fabric of that country. The first task, the rebuilding and reconciliation process, will be difficult. The continued commitment and engagement of the international community and the mobilization of significant resources will be critical if peace is to take hold in Sierra Leone. We are confident that with the commitment of all the parties involved, the people of Sierra Leone will enjoy a bright future.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to join previous speakers in congratulating your country, Sir, for having presided over the proceedings of the Security Council for this month. I, too, wish to express my appreciation for the way in which you have guided our work.

I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his exhaustive report. I should also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis Okelo, the staff of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group and all the specialized agencies that are working in Sierra Leone for their efforts to restore peace and stability in that country.

The Peace Agreement that was signed on 7 July in Lomé, the capital of Togo, between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF),

is a positive milestone in progress towards the consolidation of national reconciliation in Sierra Leone. We should also like to express our appreciation to President Eyadema of Togo and all others who contributed to ensuring that that Agreement would be signed. We should like to reaffirm our belief that respect for the implementation of that Agreement is necessary in order to move forward towards peace and to restore normal life to the people of Sierra Leone, who have been waiting for so long.

We reaffirm our belief that the international community should support the Government of Sierra Leone and provide it with economic and humanitarian assistance with a view to helping it fulfil its obligations towards the people of Sierra Leone, provide them with an adequate social and economic environment and ensure that humanitarian assistance will be received by the needy throughout the country. We reaffirm our belief that by reinforcing the institutions of peace we will prevent the conflict from resuming. Our belief that the United Nations must play an important role in the peace process in Sierra Leone is self-evident, and we will accordingly support the draft resolution before us.

We should also like to reaffirm that the security of United Nations personnel must be respected. There must be cooperation between the political, civil affairs, information, human rights and child protection elements of the Mission, and they must all cooperate with the Government of Sierra Leone within the context of the mandate of the Mission.

The President: I thank the representative of Bahrain for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): My delegation wants to join others, Sir, in expressing satisfaction at seeing Namibia, and you personally, presiding over the work of the Security Council in the month of August. We want to express our full confidence in your guidance of the Council during these turbulent times.

Today the peace process in Sierra Leone is entering a new phase. By taking action on the draft resolution before it and authorizing the provisional expansion of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), the Security Council will make its first concrete contribution to the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his recent report, the signing of the Peace Agreement on 7 July was "a great step forward for Sierra Leone" [S/1999/836, para. 52]. The successful implementation of its provisions is therefore of utmost importance. Some notable progress has already been made, especially concerning the release of conflict-related prisoners and abductees. The bulk of the work, however, has yet to be completed.

The source of our greatest concern in this critical phase is the serious delay in disarming combatants. The encampment, disarmament and demobilization process began in earnest on 18 August, at the very end of the time-frame stipulated by the Peace Agreement. It is thus estimated that six weeks after the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement only a few hundred of an estimated 20,000 rebel fighters have turned in their weapons. Some combatants have even returned home without reporting to demobilization centres.

We would also like to note that even though Mr. Foday Sankoh's return to Sierra Leone is not addressed in the peace accords, such a move by the leader of the Revolutionary United Front would represent a symbolic boost to the peace process. Mr. Sankoh should therefore be encouraged to depart for Freetown as soon as possible and by the most direct route available.

The signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement has highlighted the difficult choices that often confront the peacemakers. We would therefore like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the clear statement his Special Representative made in the disclaimer to article IX of the Lomé Peace Agreement. This was a statement of principle and, in our view, the entire Security Council subscribes to it. We will therefore keep this issue in mind and return to it at an appropriate time in the future.

The current situation in Sierra Leone calls for more active involvement by the international community and by the United Nations in the peace process. It is important to remember that the deployment of additional military observers alone will not be sufficient for the implementation of the provisions of the Peace Agreement. We therefore look forward to the forthcoming comprehensive proposals by the Secretary-General regarding a new mandate and concept of operations for UNOMSIL.

The President: I thank the representative of Slovenia for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. van Walsum (Netherlands): I join other speakers, Sir, in congratulating you and the other members of your delegation on Namibia's very effective presidency, two thirds of which have already passed in the seclusion of our consultations room, but which has now entered its visible stage. I understand that for a large part of the remainder of your presidency the entire United Nations will have the benefit of seeing you at work in this Chamber.

My delegation shares the fervent hopes of all those who see the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement as the only way forward for Sierra Leone. Our contributions thus far, of $4 million for the operations in Sierra Leone of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) plus $2 million for humanitarian assistance, are tangible proof of the importance we attach to the promotion of peace in that country. By the same token, it would in our view be inconceivable for the draft resolution to be adopted today to be seen in isolation from its legal context.

We commend the wisdom of the Secretary-General in insisting that his Special Representative enter a reservation regarding the amnesty provisions contained in the Lomé accord. As one of the moral guarantors of that accord, our Organization should clearly note the limits of impunity, as defined in international law, which apply to Sierra Leone as they do to any other part of the world. There can be no doubt that the atrocities committed against the civilian population of Sierra Leone, including widespread systematic killings, rapes and amputations, constitute massive violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. As noted by Mr. Okelo in the reservation attached to his signature on the Lomé accord, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law cannot be covered by the amnesty provisions of the accord.

The Security Council itself has gone on record unequivocally on this issue. To quote just two examples, in a presidential statement of 29 June 1998 (S/PRST/1998/18) it stressed the obligation of all States to prosecute those responsible for grave breaches of international humanitarian law, and in a presidential statement of 12 February 1999 (S/PRST/1999/6) it affirmed the need to bring to justice, in an appropriate manner, individuals who incite or cause violence against civilians in situations of armed conflict or who otherwise violate international humanitarian and human rights law. Furthermore, in its resolution 1231 (1999) of 11 March 1999 the Council urged the appropriate authorities to investigate all allegations of human rights violations in Sierra Leone with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

We note that in paragraph 54 of his report (S/1999/836) the Secretary-General places his reservations in the wider context of the goal of ending the culture of impunity. International tribunals have been set up or are being set up precisely to remedy this culture of impunity, and we owe it to the people of Sierra Leone to allow them recourse to the same remedies now open to victims of similar crimes in other countries and on other continents.

There is no peace without justice, and without accountability for the heinous crimes committed in Sierra Leone there will be no lasting peace for that country. For that reason, we welcome the fact that a commission of enquiry, as recommended by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, is currently being established. We hope that that commission, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission foreseen in the Lomé accord, will help bring forward the day when the people of Sierra Leone can confidently expect peace with justice.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): I have been attending Security Council meetings for a little bit more than two years now, Sir, and I cannot recall such lavish praise being heaped on a sitting President as we have heard today. I surrender in advance in besting my colleagues in saying anything further about the energy and skill you have committed to this task. But I wanted to associate my delegation with those thoughts.

For the first time in more than eight years, the people of Sierra Leone have an opportunity to enjoy the prospects of peace. After years of hardship, deprivation, dislocation and threats to their safety, the Sierra Leonean people can begin to focus on rebuilding their lives and their country. The Security Council, the United Nations and the international community must help them in this process.

The peace that was established in Lomé on 7 July is a fragile one. The early August hostage-taking incident in the region east of Freetown serves to remind us of the tenuous nature of the agreement signed by the President of Sierra Leone, Mr. Kabbah, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader, Mr. Foday Sankoh. Yet despite the uncertainties that lie ahead, the Lomé

Agreement symbolizes the hope that Sierra Leone has finally embarked on the path towards national reconciliation and reconstruction. To help promote the implementation of the peace accord, we believe it is absolutely essential that the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, return to Freetown. We encourage his immediate return to Sierra Leone.

The United States congratulates the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front for having had the courage to begin the difficult process aimed at ending this great national tragedy. The United States commends the Governments of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their determined efforts to maintain security in Sierra Leone and to seek peace. We particularly acknowledge the enormous sacrifices made by Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Mali, whose brave soldiers fought for peace and democracy in Sierra Leone. We congratulate President Eyadema of Togo for his instrumental role in bringing the antagonists together, and we commend the important contribution made by the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Sierra Leone, Mr. Francis Okelo, and all the men and women of the United Nations Observer Mission who worked tirelessly, under difficult circumstances, to promote the cause of peace.

The United States remains steadfast in its support for the Lomé Agreement. My Government stands ready to assist in its implementation. The United States has been a leading provider of emergency humanitarian and refugee assistance to Sierra Leone. We are prepared to consider additional help as required. The United States also remains committed to supporting the efforts of the Military Observer Group of ECOWAS (ECOMOG) in implementing the Lomé Peace Agreement.

The objective of the United States is to promote a regional peace that will end the conflict, relieve the suffering of the Sierra Leonean people and foster peace and national reconciliation. While we fully support the Lomé Agreement, we are concerned, as is the Secretary-General, by the Agreement's provisions for amnesty. We are eager to see the early establishment of a credible Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as called for by the Agreement. We also remain open to the possible establishment of an objective international fact-finding mission to document evidence of atrocities and provide information to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a basis for its work.

The United States remains committed to the pursuit of accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law, wherever they occur. At the same time, we recognize the need to allow the Lomé Agreement to bear fruit. The successful implementation of the Peace Agreement is essential to the establishment of peace, political order and stability in Sierra Leone. The best guarantee for an end to the immense suffering of the people of Sierra Leone and a beginning of reconciliation is for this Agreement to succeed.

The United States supports the deployment of additional United Nations military observers, medical personnel and other support staff to help implement the Lomé Agreement in Sierra Leone, as called for in the draft resolution now before us.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Namibia.

The 7 July signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) marked a watershed in the civil conflict that engulfed the country for more than eight years. We commend the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and other forces for keeping a democratically elected Government in power. Nigeria, Ghana and other countries in the region made enormous sacrifices in this regard.

Looking back at the events that took place, it is evident that a new culture has to be learned, a culture without impunity and adaptive to new governance and the rule of law. Sierra Leonean leaders need to continue to make a conscious effort to inculcate democratic values and belief in the worth and dignity of the human person and to diligently dispel temptations to take recourse to politics of revenge. Yes, the atrocities that took place were gross, but peace is the only alternative, and that is the option the Government of Sierra Leone has taken.

There is a pressing need to provide genuine solutions to profound problems that are seen to have been the cause of the conflict. We hope that all parties will have the political will to address them. We have no doubt that the Government will continue to work in good faith.

The social costs of resettling and rehabilitating displaced people, refugees, amputees and demobilized ex-combatants will be astronomical and the task daunting.

We call on the international community to contribute generously to this effort. We reiterate our call for the RUF to transform itself into a political party, to equitably share the burden of nation-building with its other compatriots as a dependable partner, with no crises of credibility. Only then can the RUF contribute to reconciliation and peace.

We commend ECOMOG for its efforts, and we express our thanks and gratitude to the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the United States and all other donors that have supported ECOMOG.

Namibia will vote in favour of this draft resolution, and we concur with those who have proposed that the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) be further strengthened. Finally, we express our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Mr. Francis Okelo, and to the staff of UNOMSIL for their tireless efforts and dedication to bringing peace to the embattled people of Sierra Leone.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1999/874) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Gabon, Gambia, Malaysia, Namibia, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Slovenia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1260 (1999).

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.